

State Board of Mortuary Science



consumer**brief**

THE HISTORY AND PURPOSE OF THE BOARD

The State Board of Mortuary Science of New Jersey was created in 1948. The Board's mission is to regulate the practice of mortuary science through the enforcement of statutes and regulations that set forth the proper manner for the sanitary treatment, disinfection and preservation of the deceased. The Board strives to achieve these goals while, at the same time, respecting each family's religious values and meeting the high standards established by regulations put in place by the New Jersey Department of Health regarding the handling of those who have passed away.

The Board comprises 13 members, eight of whom are licensed mortuary science practitioners with a minimum of five years' experience practicing in New Jersey, the experience having been attained immediately preceding the appointment. The governor appoints each member for a term of three years and no member may serve more than two consecutive terms. One Board member must be an employee of a department within the executive branch of State government, while the other four members of the Board are chosen from the public. One of those public members of the Board must be at least 62 years of age. Every Board member serves until a new appointee is confirmed and takes his or her seat on the Board.

EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

Practitioners of mortuary science (also known as funeral directors, morticians or undertakers) must meet certain educational standards. A candidate for a license as a funeral director must have a high school diploma and at least two years of college at an institution of higher education accredited by the Commission on Higher Education. If a candidate has completed two years of college, he/she may then enter a one-year course at a school of mortuary science recognized by the American Board of Funeral Service Education. He/she then must take part in a two-year internship.

Every candidate, no matter how many years of college have been completed, also must pass a mortuary jurisprudence examination and, once the internship has been completed, a practical examination as well. If a candidate has completed at least three years of college and one year of education at a school of mortuary science, the term of the internship is one year.

WHAT CONSUMERS SHOULD KNOW

When a bereaved family requires the services of a funeral director, perhaps the best way to find a reputable licensed practitioner is by getting a referral from a friend or member of the clergy. When the family is trying to select a funeral director from a short list of possible choices, the family can check to see if each person on that list has a license issued by the State of New Jersey and whether that license is in good standing. This may be done by going to the Board's Web site, www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/mort/, and then clicking on **Consumer Information**. The family will then be able to click on **Licensee Directory** to enter each individual's first and last name and the city where each person practices. The family also will find out if any disci-

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www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/mort/



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iplinary action has been taken against any licensee on its list. In addition, on that same **Consumer Information** page, anyone who has experienced a problem with a funeral director will find the Board's **Complaint Form**. The complaint form must be printed out and filled out legibly by hand. It should then be submitted to the Board along with **copies** of any relevant documents. If consumers do not have access to the Internet, they may call the Board at **973-504-6425** to request that a complaint form be mailed to them.

The State Board of Mortuary Science of New Jersey investigates every complaint it receives. Usually the consumer is asked, after the complaint form has been filled out and sent to the Board, to submit a clearly written detailed account concerning what occurred. The licensee is then provided with a copy of the complaint and the additional filing. At that juncture the licensee is given an opportunity to respond to the allegations. The entire Board reviews the evidence and decides the matter on the merits of all of the submitted documentation. If the Board is unable to reach a decision, both parties will be asked to appear before the Board's Investigative Inquiry Committee for a comprehensive review of the situation. Investigations may take a few months

to be completed. If a dispute is strictly about fees, the Board will refer the matter to the Division of Consumer Affairs' Alternative Resolution Unit, a separate unit of the Division with a stellar record of resolving disputes of this nature. There is no fee for A.D.R. services. The Board's decision is appealable first to the Board itself. If either party is dissatisfied with the Board's decision at that point, the matter would then be sent to be heard by a judge in the Civil Court system of New Jersey. Please note that there are fees involved when filing a complaint with the Civil Court system.

The State Board of Mortuary Science of New Jersey is dedicated to assisting the families of New Jersey at a time when they are most in need of help and guidance. The Board works diligently every day to ensure that individuals licensed as practitioners of mortuary science in New Jersey perform their solemn duties at the highest level of professional competence and integrity.

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